

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5367

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 2662

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, TS

SUBJECT: TUNISIA'S UNHAPPINESS AT THE PROSPECT
OF ELIMINATION OF MILITARY GRANT AID

1. IN MEETING WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE KHEFACHA MAY 2,
IN WHICH I DISCUSSED THE NECESSITY FOR GOT TO BUDGET
FUNDS ON CONTINGENCY BASIS IN EVENT OF NON-AVAILABILITY
OF GRANT AID FUNDS FOR FY75, KHEFACHA MADE IMPASSIONED
APPEAL FOR CONTINUED U.S. GRANT AID SUPPORT. HE EXPRESSED
VIEW THAT CONTINUATION OF GRANT AID, IF ONLY IN ANNUAL
AMOUNT OF \$1 MILLION, IS IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICALLY TO GOT
ARMED FORCES AND REFLECTS LONGSTANDING U.S. COMMITMENT
TO HELP TUNISIA. HE SAID SUCH ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATES TO
TUNISIAN MILITARY FORCES U.S. UNDERTAKING TO HELP TUNISIAN
MILITARY DEVELOP CREDIBLE DEFENSE POSTURE. HE STRESSED
THAT ELIMINATION OF U.S. GRANT AID TO ONE OF U.S.'
STAUNCHEST FRIENDS IN AREA CONTRASTS WITH U.S. PROPOSAL
TO PROVIDE EGYPT WITH SOME \$250 MILLION.

2. SEVERAL TIMES I STRESSED TO KHEFACHA THAT OUR PROPOSAL
THAT GOT MAKE FINANCIAL CONTINGENCY PLANS WAS INTENDED
TO ASSURE THAT THERE BE NO INTERRUPTION IN U.S. SUPPLY
SUPPORT TO TUNISIAN MILITARY DURING CALENDAR YEAR 1975
AND WAS IN NO WAY TO BE CONSTRUED TO MEAN THAT GRANT
AID WOULD BE UNAVAILABLE IN FISCAL 1975. ON THE CONTRARY,
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WE HOPED THAT SUCH GRANT AID WOULD AGAIN BECOME AVAILABLE

IN FY 1975 ALTHOUGH, AS I HAD INDICATED PREVIOUSLY TO MINISTER, GRANT AID PROGRAM IN TUNISIA IN PROCESS OF BEING PHASED OUT. MEANWHILE, WE WOULD CONTINUE, SUBJECT TO CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL, TO PROVIDE FMS CREDIT ASSISTANCE FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. THUS WE PLANNED TO SUSTAIN U.S. ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIAN MILITARY.

3. KHEFACHA SAID THAT MATTER OF CONTINUING GRANT AID MIGHT BE SUBJECT WHICH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA WOULD WISH TO DISCUSS DURING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO U.S.

4. COMMENT: I THINK THAT MEETING WAS USEFUL IN MAKING TUNISIANS MORE FULLY AWARE THAN EVER BEFORE OF FACT THAT GRANT AID TO TUNISIA WILL BE COMING TO AN END. ON OTHER HAND, KHEFACHA'S VERY STRONG PITCH FOR CONTINUATION OF GRANT AID AND HIS DEEP CONCERN AT PROSPECT OF ITS EARLY TERMINATION REINFORCES OUR VIEW THAT GRANT AID SHOULD BE CONTINUED AT LEAST THROUGH FY 1975. SUBSTANTIAL U.S.ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE PACKAGE RECENTLY PROPOSED FOR ARAB NEAR EAST STATES MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT NOW FOR US TO RATIONALIZE TO TUNISIANS OUR REDUCED ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN TUNISIA. I THINK IT IS POSSIBLE THAT BOURGUIBA WILL INDEED RAISE THIS SUBJECT DURING HIS VISIT TO U.S.
SEELYE

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